DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 224 118 EA 015 204

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TITLE	Conflict: Alternatives to Blowing a Fuse. A Manual for Workshop Leaders. Keys to School Boardsmanship. A Program of Continuing Education for School Board Members.
INSTITUTION	Montana School Boards Association, Helena.; National School Boards Association, Washington, D.C.; Northwest Regional Educational Lab., Portland, Oreg.; Washington State School Directors Association, Olympia.
SPONS AGENCY	National Inst. of Education (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	82
CONTRACT	400-80-0105
NOTE	103p.; For related documents, see EA 015 201-212. Also contributing to the development of this document were the Idaho School Boards Association, the Oregon School Boards Association, and the Association of Alaska School Boards. Document also appears under the title "Conflict Management."
AVAILABLE FROM	Publications, National School Boards Association, 1055 Thomas Jefferson Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20007.
PUB TYPE	Guides - General (050) -- Audiovisual Materials (100)
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Board Administrator Relationship; *Board of Education Role; Boards of Education; *Community Relations; *Conflict Resolution; Elementary Secondary Education; Leaders Guides; *Management Development; Program Administration; Program Development; Program Evaluation; Program Implementation; School Community Relationship; Superintendents; *Workshops
IDENTIFIERS	*Board of Education Members

ABSTRACT

The materials in this manual are designed to help workshop leaders prepare for and present a workshop for school board members on managing conflict in the conduct of educational governance. The workshop helps board members develop and apply a framework for understanding conflict and introduces alternative approaches for managing it. The manual consists of six sections: an introduction; three sections on planning, presenting, and evaluating the workshop; a selection of resource materials; and a booklet for workshop participants. The discussion of planning contains information on the focus and scope of the workshop, familiarization with resource materials and equipment, workshop presentation techniques, and suitable grouping of participants. The presentation section includes sequential descriptions of workshop activities, leader focuses for each activity, and instructions for conducting the activities. The resource materials provided include a paper on the concepts underlying conflict management, a discussion of conflict between boards and superintendents, and masters from which transparencies for projection at the workshop can be reproduced. (Author/PGD)

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- The Association of Alaska School Boards
- The Idaho School Boards Association
- The Montana School Boards Association
- The Oregon School Boards Association
- The Washington State School Directors' Association
- The National School Boards Association
- The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

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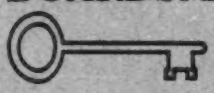
KEYS TO SCHOOL BOARDSMANSHIP



Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

Alternatives to Blowing a Fuse

A Manual for Workshop Leaders

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KEYS TO SCHOOL
BOARDSMANSHIP

Prologue:

This manual is one in a series of thirteen developed by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) as part of the "Keys to School Boardsmanship" project.

The workshop programs resulting from the project are intended to help strengthen local school boards through continuing education.

The workshops in the series have been thoroughly tested by NWREL staff and by the staff of state school board associations in Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington. These programs have been found to be extremely useful as tools for strengthening continuing education services to school board members.

The "Keys to School Boardsmanship" materials are now being published and distributed by the National School Boards Association (NSBA). In addition, the NSBA is developing a national center designed to assist state associations to make the best use of the material.

Thirteen manuals in the series now available from NSBA include:

- Board/Administrator Relations
- Building Bridges: School Board Political Roles
- Communicating with the Community
- Conflict: Alternatives to Blowing a Fuse
- Effective School Board Meetings
- The Educational Management Team
- Policy Development
- Policy is Power
- Program Evaluation: School Board Roles
- What Do School Boards Do?
- School Board Self-Assessment
- School Improvement: A Tune the School Board Can Play
- Teamwork: The Board and Superintendent in Action

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

This manual is designed to be helpful to workshop leaders who are preparing to present the Conflict: Alternatives to Blowing a Fuse workshop to members of local school boards.

Purpose and Rationale

Conflict: Alternatives to Blowing a Fuse is a workshop about managing conflict in the conduct of educational governance. Through it, board members develop and apply a framework for understanding conflict, and alternative approaches for managing it.

There is some evidence that, during the past, school boards have tended to avoid certain kinds of conflict, and as a result, fumbled away significant aspects of the local control of schools. That is to say, the recent trend of intervention into school affairs on the part of other governmental bodies and agencies can be attributed in some measure to the inability or unwillingness of school boards to confront and manage conflict.

This may well be because parties and interest groups in local education controversy have sought redress for their concerns and grievances at higher levels of government or through the courts. They have, in effect, circumvented the local school board, in part because of a perception that they could not achieve their goals and objectives in any other way. And, to the extent that many school boards have avoided the same conflicts, this prompted interest groups in many communities to mobilize and organize, to effect change through court decision, statute or regulation.

It is a premise of this workshop that conflict is an inherent aspect of school governance, and that learning to cope with and manage conflict is an important area for school board development.

Uses

The Conflict workshop has several possible uses, from the point of view of a state association of local school boards. It has been designed and used primarily to develop the awareness of the general membership about the constructive possibilities for managing conflict. It could easily be adapted for use with board presidents. Parts of the workshop are potentially useful for individual boards which are experiencing conflict.

Goals and Objectives

The overall goal of this workshop is to develop a framework of concepts through which participants can understand conflict management as it applies to school governance. The specific objectives for the workshop include:

- Developing an understanding of the causes of conflict
- Examining and understanding some of the dynamics of conflict situations
- Gaining insight into how participants, as individuals, typically approach conflict situations
- Identifying and applying conflict management strategies to typical school board conflict situations
- Identifying the advantages of managing conflict, as opposed to avoiding it
- Understanding the advantages of anticipating conflict and taking a proactive stance in managing it, as opposed to taking a reactive stance

These objectives, and activities designed to achieve them, are described in greater detail in Section 3 of this manual.

Organization of the Leader's Guide

The remaining sections of this Leader's Guide contain materials the workshop leader will need to review carefully before presenting the workshop.

Section 2: Planning the Workshop

This section contains information about preparations the leader will need to make before presenting the workshop. Included are suggestions about:

- Becoming familiar with background materials
- Physical arrangements for the workshop
- Grouping of participants
- Preparing materials for the workshop
- Equipment needed

Section 3: Presenting the Workshop

Workshop leaders will need to give careful attention to this section, which serves as a "lesson plan" for conducting the workshop. Here, each workshop activity is described in detail, along with time allocation, and references to participant materials and other resources utilized in the activity. You will find:

- o A suggested sequence and flow of workshop activities
- o Detailed instructions on how to conduct each activity
- o A leader focus for each activity
- o Helpful hints about ways of handling workshop activities

Section 4: Evaluating the Workshop

Evaluation and feedback are important in developing the skills and perceptions of the workshop leader. In this section, you will find:

- o A rationale for workshop evaluation
- o Suggestions for uses of evaluation data
- o A discussion of the workshop evaluation form developed for this workshop

Section 5: Resources

This section contains topical background reading for the workshop leader. It should be read and assimilated before presenting the workshop, since it is a more thorough treatment of concepts and themes developed in it. Here you will find:

- o Conflict Management for School Boards: A Concept Paper
- o Board/Superintendent Conflict: Causes and Solutions

Section 6: Participant Materials

This section contains the participant booklet designed for use in this workshop. Each workshop participant should be provided a copy of the booklet. References to participant booklet activities and papers are found in Section 3 of the manual.

SECTION 2: PLANNING THE WORKSHOP

In planning the Conflict: Alternatives to Blowing a Fuse workshop, you will need to consider several issues and make important strategic decisions. The issues and some options are discussed in this section.

Scope of the Workshop

The Conflict workshop is designed for presentation in a single session of 1-1/2 hours minimum to 3 hours maximum. The flexibility lies in the number of activities which are available to you in the workshop design, as well as in how much time you choose to spend with each activity and in discussion during the workshop.

The workshop objectives, listed below, can be adjusted in terms of emphasis you wish to give to each. However you choose to make this decision, remember that good workshop practice requires that objectives be clear and attainable within the time available. The workshop objectives are as follows:

- To develop participants' understanding of five basic causes of conflict
- To develop participants' understanding of the conflict process and several important group dynamics in conflict situations
- To develop participants' insights into their own approaches to conflict situations
- To develop participants' familiarity with and practice of several conflict management strategies
- To emphasize the importance of conflict management in local school district governance
- To apply workshop skills in analyzing "back home" conflict situations

It is also important for you, as the workshop leader, to be able to explain to participants what the workshop is not going to cover. For example, the workshop is not designed to treat collective bargaining specifically, and it is not a how-to-do-it workshop.

Uses for the Workshop

The Conflict: Alternatives to Blowing a Fuse workshop has been designed and used specifically for statewide or regional (county) uses, rather than for individual school boards. Still, you may find parts of the workshop design or pieces of the material to be useful in individual board consultations.

The workshop has been used effectively with groups ranging in size from 10 up to 120 participants, with an average group size of 35. It should be pointed out that 20-50 participants is an optimum group for this workshop with a single presenter. Larger groups can be unwieldly and require some additional leaders who circulate, answering questions, repeating instructions and keeping the workshop moving.

Workshop Agenda (Sample)

The following is a typical workshop agenda for a 2-1/2 hour presentation:

- 1/2 hour	o	Check room arrangements, equipment, materials, refreshments
-0-		
5 min.	o	Introductions and Objectives
5 min.	o	Focusing Activity: "What Conflict Means"
5 min.	o	What is Conflict--Lecturette
5 min.	o	Causes of Conflict--Lecturette with examples
30 min.	o	Conflict Dynamics Simulation
30 min.	o	Conflict Approaches Assessment
10 min.	o	Conflict Cycle--Lecturette
20 min.	o	Case Studies Activity (two problems)
5 min.	o	Conflict Management Strategies--Lecturette
30 min.	o	Application Clinic (minimum treatment)
5 min.	o	Workshop summary, evaluation and wrap-up
150 min.		

You will find further details and procedures for each activity in Section 3 of the manual.

It is strongly suggested that this workshop be presented in no less than 1-1/2 hours. In the shorter time frame, workshop activities must be compromised. Workshop leaders tend to do more talking, and participants have less chance to fully engage in learning activities, with the result that less learning takes place.

Becoming Familiar with the Materials

There are several kinds of materials you will need to review and become familiar with before presenting the workshop:

- Background Materials: These are found in Section 5 of the Manual, and represent topical information relating to the workshop content. Here, you will find:

  — Conflict Management for School Boards: A Concept Paper

  — Board/Superintendent Conflict: Causes and Solutions

  Reviewing these papers will help you become more familiar with the concepts and themes which make up the content of the workshop.

- Workshop Procedures: These are outlined in detail in Section 3. As you review the procedures, you may wish to underline particular points of emphasis you wish to give in the workshop.

  Alternatively, you may want to write out your own outline of workshop procedures. This sometimes helps to put things in your own words and to include examples from your own experiences.

  You will note that each workshop activity is introduced by name and is followed by a Leader Focus, a statement of tone or purpose for the activity. It may also give some suggestions about the pacing of the activity.

  In the left hand column are estimated time requirements for each activity, and for parts of it. In the right hand column are references and resources related to the activity. These include transparencies, referred to by number and materials in the participant booklet.

- Adding Materials: You may find materials you wish to add to this package. Citations of state statutes, regulations, experiences of other school boards, newspaper articles or materials you develop all can be added to the program as handouts to participants. Be sure to plan how you want to treat added materials. As a general "rule of thumb," don't hand out anything without at least referring to it and discussing it.

- Transparencies: Along with the manual, you should have the related set of overhead transparencies. These include:

  CO 1 What is Conflict

  CO 2 Causes of Conflict

  CO 3 Group Dynamics in Conflict

  CO 4 Scoring the Questionnaire

  CO 5 Conflict Profile

  CO 6 Conflict Values (and Overlay) and Approaches

  CO 7 Forcing

  CO 8 Harmonizing

  CO 9 Avoiding

  CO 10 Negotiating

  CO 11 Integrating

  CO 12 The Conflict Cycle

  CO 13 Strategies for Managing Conflict

  CO 14 Conflict is Destructive...

  CO 15 Conflict is Constructive...

  These transparencies are keyed to specific workshop activities, and referenced in Section 3 of the manual.

- Participant Booklet: Each workshop participant should receive a copy of this booklet. It contains worksheets, idea papers and an evaluation form necessary for their meaningful participation in the workshop. Familiarize yourself with the booklet. It is referenced by page number in Section 3 of the manual.

Physical Arrangements for the Workshop

This is another issue requiring your attention before presenting the workshop. Since a fair amount of participation and group discussion is required by the workshop activities, the ideal arrangement is to seat five to seven participants at round tables throughout the room. In this way, each work group member can easily see and interact with others at the table. Also, choose a strategic position from which to make your presentations and upon which to project the overhead transparencies.

The workgroup/table arrangement allows you to circulate during the workshop to check on progress, estimate time needed, give instructions and offer clarifications.

Grouping of Participants

Give some thought to this issue. Typically, two kinds of groupings of participants are possible in a workshop.

- Stranger groups, made up of individuals who do not know one another well, for example, school board members from different school districts
- Home groups, made up of people who are quite familiar with one another because they work together or socialize often, for example, school board members from the same district

Stranger groups are created simply by directing participants to sit with people from other districts as they enter the room. There are advantages to establishing such groupings, including:

- A sharing of a variety of experiences, ideas and perspectives
- Development of a broader perspective about problems, issues and solutions
- An avoidance of tensions, problems and differences which may be present in a home group

In establishing stranger groups, care should be taken to allow individuals to get acquainted with one another early in the workshop. You might ask people at each table to introduce themselves, and give some information about their district, their schools, or other matters.

Another alternative is to establish home groups for the workshop. Home groups have several advantages, too:

- They may make direct use of the workshop to develop plans or ideas they want to put to use.
- Since they are already familiar with one another, they need no time to get acquainted.
- They have established patterns of discussion and interaction.

Your use of home or stranger groups will depend on your overall objectives and upon what you know about the workshop participants.

In either case, you should plan to monitor the group progress regularly during the workshop to ensure full participation and task-related behavior.

Equipment Needed

This workshop requires the use of an overhead projector and screen (or blank wall) for projection.

Check the projector in advance to ensure that it is in good operating order. It is a good idea to have a spare projector bulb close at hand in case of malfunction.

If, because of room size, you need to use a microphone, try to find a portable one which will allow you to move about the workshop area.

You may choose to use flipcharts, a blackboard, or a blank transparency to introduce additional information during the workshop proceedings.

SECTION 3: PRESENTING THE WORKSHOP

To the Leader:

This workshop is designed to be presented in a single session of 1 1/2 to 3 hours. There are some built-in optional activities which will allow the workshop leader to expand or contract the workshop depending upon available time.

The workshop encourages participants to develop a framework of ideas for analyzing conflict situations they may be facing as school board members. As a result of the workshop, participants will have a better understanding of causes of conflict, some of the dynamics at work, and strategies for managing conflict. In addition, they will have greater insight into their own approaches to handling conflict.

Included in this workshop are the following:

- A focusing activity, designed to bring the participants' attention to the topic
- A lecturette on the causes of conflict, including examples and illustrations appropriate to school boards
- A simulation, which serves to illustrate some of the dynamics involved in conflict
- The assessment activity, designed to give participants greater insight into their own approaches to handling conflict
- Case study situations, designed to offer participants opportunities to examine various conflict management strategies
- A clinic session, in which participants can analyze conflict situations they may be facing.

The workshop plan is outlined below, along with estimated times and resources needed for each activity. Also included are references to materials in the participant booklet. Study the workshop procedures and related materials carefully before you present the workshop. You will find additional background material in Section 5 of this manual.

WORKSHOP PROCEDURES

TIME		MATERIALS
Total Time: 6 min.	Activity 1: Getting a Focus on Conflict Leader Focus: This activity serves to bring participants' attention to the workshop topic. It also builds an expectation for participation in workshop activities.	

TIME			MATERIALS
2 min.	o	Referring to Worksheet 1 in the participant booklet, ask participants to answer the question: — What meanings or associations does conflict have for you?	Worksheet 1 Participant Booklet
3 min.	o	Ask participants to share their answers to the question on a volunteer basis.	
1 min.	o	Summarize the participants' ideas, pointing out that most of our associations with conflict are negative ones, and that this is a result of our experiences with conflict.	

> Helpful Hint: This activity should be conducted rapidly, as a quick opener for the workshop. The leader should acknowledge participants' ideas about conflict and refer to them throughout the workshop.

Total Time: 5 min.

Activity 2: Workshop Goals and Objectives

Leader Focus: Following quickly from the previous activity, this activity will serve to develop participants' expectations about what will and will not be covered in the workshop, and about the length of the session.

4 min.	o	Using newsprint or transparency, post and review the goals and objectives of the workshop. — The overall goal of the workshop is to develop an understanding of conflict which will help make it more manageable. — The specific objectives of the workshop are to: --- Understand what causes conflict --- Examine some group dynamics associated with conflict	Newsprint or Transparency

TIME		MATERIALS

— Gain insight into our individual approach to conflict

— Examine and apply conflict management strategies

— Analyze and provide advice for conflict situations which participants may be facing

1 min. o Discuss the underlying assumption in the workshop—that conflict is a <u>normal</u> process in school board affairs, and that properly managed, conflict can have productive and constructive results.

> <u>Helpful Hint</u>: It is important in this activity that participants understand the scope of the workshop. Some may have elected to attend because of a misunderstanding, and may be expecting the workshop to deal with collective bargaining or other specific topics. This is the time for participants to adjust their expectations to what is going to happen.

Total Time: 20 min.

<u>Activity 3: Defining Conflict</u>

<u>Leader Focus</u>: This activity will develop a working definition of conflict. This definition serves as a foundation for the remainder of the workshop activities.

2 min. o Ask participants to answer the second question on Worksheet 1 in the Participant Booklet: — Worksheet 1 Part 2

— What is Conflict?

5 min. o Appoint a discussion leader for each work group and direct this person to develop a work group definition.

3 min. o Ask the discussion leaders to report their group's definition of conflict.

TIME			MATERIALS
2 min.	o	Summarize the key elements of the participants' deductions on newsprint.	Newsprint or Transparency
3 min.	o	Using the transparency, share a definition of conflict and discuss its implictions. Make the following points: -- Conflict involves <u>two or more</u> parties. -- Conflict involves not only competition, but <u>blocking</u> of the other party's goals. -- Conflict is <u>active</u>. -- Conflict involves hostility, anger.	Trans. CO 1 Conflict...
2 min.	o	Compare competition and conflict by using the analogy of sports: -- Competition is represented by a 100-yard dash, where each party is trying to win, but without blocking other parties. -- Conflict is represented by boxing, where the winner is the party who successfully stops the competitor.	
3 min.	o	Ask participants to give school board examples of competition and conflict, to help reinforce the ideas at this point.	

> <u>Helpful Hint</u>: This activity is optional. If time is a problem in your presentation, share and discuss the definition in a lecture mode.

Total Time: 15 min.

<u>Activity 4: What Causes Conflict?</u>

<u>Leader Focus</u>: In this activity, participants examine five underlying causes of conflict and apply this information to a conflict situation they are familiar with.

TIME			MATERIALS
5 min.	o	Ask participants to think of a conflict situation that they, as school board members, are familiar with. Ask them to identify why they think the conflict is occurring--what's causing it.	
3 min.	o	Ask for several volunteers to share their analysis with the entire group. Don't ask for work group action at this point.	
5 min.	o	Using the transparency, discuss the five causes of conflict, and give some examples which relate to school boards and school governance:	Trans. CO 2 Causes...
		— Differences in values, beliefs	
		— Differences in goals	
		— Differences in perception	
		— Differences in position, status	
		— Role pressures	
2 min.	o	As you discuss these causes, ask participants to give further examples from their experience.	
	o	Refer to Idea Paper 1, "Causes of Conflict," for reading later on.	Idea Paper 1

> Helpful Hint: Treat this activity as an interactive lecturette by asking for participation in giving examples and illustrations. Keep it moving rapidly.

Total Time: 35 min.

Activity 5: Group Dynamics in Conflict Situations

Leader Focus: This activity serves two purposes: first, it gets participants up from their chairs and moving around; and second, it teaches something about group dynamics in conflict situations. Keep it light and rapidly moving.

TIME			MATERIALS
1 min.	o	Explain that in this simulation, participants will learn about some dynamics in conflict situations. Tell them that their participation is essential to the success of the activity.	
1 min.	o	Explain that you are going to tell a story. At the end of the story, you're going to ask them some questions about the story. They are to listen, and they are <u>not</u> to use pencils or pocket calculators during the activity.	
3 min.	o	Tell the following story*: One day, Farmer Jones was on his way to town. He saw a pony in Farmer Brown's pasture. He thought the pony would make a fine gift for his small son. Jones went up to Brown's house, knocked on the door, and asked if Brown would sell the pony. Brown thought about it, and agreed to sell the pony for $60. Jones took the pony home. His son was very happy. Next day, Brown paid Jones a visit. He told Jones that his daughter missed the pony, so he wanted to buy it back. After thinking about it, Jones sold the pony back to Brown for $70. The following day, Jones visited Brown again to say that his son wanted the pony back. Brown agreed to sell Jones the pony for $80. As you might expect, Brown visited Jones the next day to buy the pony back. Jones sold him the pony for $90.	
1 min.	o	Ask participants the following questions: — Did either Jones or Brown make a profit in these transactions? — If so, who made a profit, and how much?	

*The story and activity originated with Dr. Irving Goldaber. It has been adapted for the purposes of this workshop.

TIME			MATERIALS
1 min.	o	Now repeat the story quickly in outline form, without any details.	
1 min.	o	Remind the participants that each person is expected to answer the questions and to participate in the simulation.	
1 min.	o	Ask participants to raise their hands if they think:	
		-- Jones and Brown broke even	
1 min.	o	Ask those who raise their hands to stand up and meet in one corner of the room.	
5 min.	o	Repeat this procedure for those who think:	
		-- Jones made $10	
		-- Brown made $10	
		-- Jones made $20	
		-- Brown made $20	
		-- Etc.	
1 min.	o	Be sure that everyone participates. If some have not answered the questions by now, ask them what their answers are. Get them to form a new group or to join an existing group.	
3 min.	o	Ask each group to choose a spokesperson, and to prepare an explanation of its answer.	
5 min.	o	Ask each spokesperson to give the group's answer and reasons for it.	
2 min.	o	After each group has reported, give participants an opportunity to change to another group--one whose answer now seems to be more reasonable.	
(5 min.)	o	If a number of participants change groups at this point, repeat the caucussing, choosing spokespersons and reporting procedures.	
1 min.	o	Ask participants to look around the room. Ask them which group seems to have the most strength if we settled the problem by majority vote at this point.	
	o	Ask participants to return to their seats.	

TIME			MATERIALS
3 min.	o	Using the transparency, point out the dynamics at work in this conflict simulation:	Trans. CO 3 Dynamics...
		— Each party feels that <u>its position is right</u>. (Each party presented its view with conviction.)	
		— The parties are <u>entrenched</u> in their position. (Few people changed groups.)	
		— The groups exerted <u>peer pressure</u> upon members not to change positions. (How did those who changed groups feel? How did others feel about those who changed groups?)	
		— The conflict <u>escalated</u>. (The stronger one group argued its point, the stronger other groups felt about their position.)	
3 min.	o	In order to demonstrate the answer to the problem, select three volunteers to act out the story, Jones, Brown and Pony.	$200 in play money, $10 denominations
		— Count out $100 each for Jones and Brown.	
		— Narrate the story, and have Jones, Brown and the Pony act it out.	
		— Correct answer—Jones made $20.	
2 min.	o	Debrief the simulation with reference to:	
		— The causes of conflict--differences in perception, especially regarding the "value" of the pony	Trans. CO 2 Causes
		— Dynamics of conflict	Trans. CO 3 Dynamics
	o	Refer to Idea Paper 2, "Dynamics in Conflict," for reading later on.	Idea Paper 2

TIME | MATERIALS

Helpful Hint: Keep this activity light and fun, but make clear your expectation that everyone participate in it.

In telling the story, you might substitute names of participants for Jones and Brown. Then, ask these participants to act out the answer to the story.

You may think of other activities which will serve the instructional purposes here. The activity should cause the participants to take a position on an issue, meet as position groups and explain their position, and have an opportunity to change positions.

A caution is in order here: If you create a "real" conflict situation, you must expect that participants may seriously engage in it, and that it may be difficult to reach closure in the activity. Most certainly the instructional objectives will be deflected and diverted.

Total Time: 45 min.

Activity 6: Assessing Your Approach to Conflict*

Leader Focus: In this activity, participants will gain insight into their own approach to conflict situations through completing a questionnaire. Also, they will learn about alternative approaches, and strengths and weaknesses of each.

3 min.

- Introduce the activity by pointing out historical examples of different approaches to conflict:
  - Chamberlain, British Prime Minister in the 1930s--appeasement toward Hitler

*This activity is freely adapted from the work of Eiseman (1977), Thomas (1976), Blake, et. al. (1964) and Hall (1969).

TIME			MATERIALS
		— Eisenhower, winning at any cost--the Normandy invasion	
		— MacArthur--winning, with minimal costs--the island hopping strategy in the Pacific	
		— Kissinger--negotiation of settlement of Vietnam War and Mideast conflict	
		— Ghandi--non-violent confrontation of authority	
		— Other examples you prefer	
	o	Suggest that there are different approaches to conflict, and that in this activity participants will better understand their own.	
10 min.	o	Ask participants, working individually, to complete the conflict approaches questionnaire in their booklet.	Worksheet 2 Questionnaire
	o	Give the following guidelines:	
		— Think about an actual conflict situation your board has faced.	
		— Answer the questionnaire in terms of how you actually approached the conflict, not what you think is the best way.	
2 min.	o	Refer to the scoring sheet, Worksheet 3, in the booklet. Give the following instructions, using the transparency to illustrate:	Worksheet 3 Scoring... Trans. CO 4 Scoring...
		— Transfer the answers circled in the questionnaire to the scoring sheet. If for pair 1 in the questionnaire participants circled b, then they should circle b on the scoring sheet.	
		— Count all of the circled letters in each vertical column on the scoring sheet. Record this number at the bottom of each column.	
2 min.	o	Refer to the profile worksheet in the booklet. Using the transparency, give the following instructions to develop the profile.	Worksheet 4 Profile Trans. CO 5 Profile

TIME			MATERIALS
		— Transfer the column scores from the scoring sheet by circling the appropriate number on the profile sheet.	
		— Connect the circled numbers on the profile sheet to develop the profile.	
	o	Point out that all participants now should have a profile of their approach to the conflict situation they had in mind. Emphasize that all five approaches are valid, that none is "better than" another. Also point out that the profile resulted from thinking about one conflict situation.	
3 min.	o	Using the transparency, discuss the two values involved in a school board conflict:	Trans. CO 6 Values
		— Achieving goals as an individual board member	
		— Preserving working relationships among members of the board	
10 min.	o	Discuss the five approaches to conflict as they reflect these value dimensions:	Trans. CO 6 (Overlay) Approaches
		— Forcing: Primarily concerned with gaining individual goals	
		— Harmonizing: Primarily concerned with preserving relationships among members	
		— Avoiding: Concerned with neither value	
		— Negotiating: Concerned with a compromise which will provide for both values	
		— Integrating: Concerned with optimal achievement of both values. "We can both achieve our goals, and board relationships can be better if..."	
	o	Emphasize that each of these approaches is valid and effective, depending upon the situation. However, if we approach conflict the same way time after time, or if the board develops patterns—of avoidance, of forcing, of harmonizing, problems can develop.	

TIME		MATERIALS
	o Point out that some recent research suggests that school boards have tended to <u>avoid</u> conflict, especially in controversial areas such as desegregation, sex education, etc.; the result of avoidance has sometimes been federal and state intervention, and loss of local control.	
	o Emphasize that effective local control requires effective conflict management, or solving school district problems at the school district level.	
10 min.	o Using the transparencies, give the interpretive information for each conflict approach. Discuss and give examples of: — Advantages — Disadvantages — Questions for those who score high or low — Consequences of repeated use of the approach	Trans. CO 7 Forcing Trans. CO 8 Harmonizing Trans. CO 9 Avoiding Trans. CO 10 Negotiating Trans. CO 11 Integrating
5 min.	o Ask for questions and comments.	
	o Review and summarize the main ideas of the activity.	
	o Refer to Idea Paper 3, "Approaches to Conflict," for reading later on.	Idea Paper 3
	o Refer to Idea Paper 4, "Your Approach to Conflict," for later reference and self-analysis.	Idea Paper 4

<u>Helpful Hint</u>: You should treat the information resulting from the conflict approaches activity as confidential. Unless participants volunteer, they should not be asked to reveal the results of the questionnaire. Also, Idea Paper 4 is intended to be a "take home" for individual self-analysis.

TIME		MATERIALS
Total Time: 15 min.	Activity 7: The Conflict Cycle	
	Leader Focus: In this activity, participants will be given information about the process of conflict and the conflict cycle. They will see that different approaches to conflict are appropriate at different points in this process.	
1 min.	o Introduce the activity by explaining that conflict follows a certain course or process or cycle, and that different approaches are useful at various points in this cycle.	
1 min.	o Point out a familiar or current example of conflict on the international scene, and ask participants to think about how it developed, what stages were involved.	
10 min.	o Using the transparency, explain the conflict cycle. Make the following points. Give familiar examples from your own experiences.	Trans. CO 12 Conflict Cycle
	— Stage 1: Calm There is no apparent conflict; things are running smoothly. There is internal board harmony, no challenge to the board from outside interests and communication with administrators is routine.	
	— Stage 2: Challenge The status quo is challenged. This may come as a result of internal board disagreement, dissatisfaction with administrator performance or community interest group activity.	
	— Stage 3: Escalation Now, challenges and counterchallenges accumulate. The conflict widens as other groups and individuals get involved and take positions. The usual methods of control are no longer adequate.	
	— Stage 4: Crisis A determination is made that immediate action is required to manage or resolve the conflict.	

TIME		MATERIALS

— Stage 5: Confrontation

The board begins to recognize that some of the issues are legitimate and should be addressed. It begins to engage others in defining the issues.

— Stage 6: Communication

Now direct, face-to-face communication between the disputing parties, the board and its challengers, takes place. As the issues are clarified, negotiation begins.

— Stage 7: Compromise

An agreement is reached between the parties directly involved, resulting in gains and losses for them. Often this agreement must be taken back for "endorsement" by other power sources--community leaders and organizations, legal counsel, etc.

— Stage 8: Change

As the agreement is adopted and implemented, the parties will have to do some things differently and forge a new working relationship.

-- There is a "trial period" during which all parties review and communicate about the new relationship.

3 min. o Ask for any comments or discussion of the conflict cycle. Suggest that participants can use the cycle to help diagnose conflict and to predict its course.

Total Time: 20-45 min., depending on number of problems addressed

Activity 8: Applying Strategies for Managing Conflict

Leader Focus: In this activity, participants determine their solutions to several conflict case situations. Each activity is then debriefed in terms of individual approaches observed, outcomes desired and strategies employed.

- Be sure participants are sitting in groups of five or six, to facilitate discussion and interaction.

3 min.

- Introduce the activity by reinforcing the idea that different conflict situations call for different approaches or strategies. Tell participants that they will now have an opportunity to develop strategies for several typical school board conflict situations.

10 min. for each problem

- Call attention to the case situations in the participant booklet. Give the following instructions:

  — Read the case problems

  — Develop your solution individually

  — Select a discussion leader

  — Develop a "board" solution to the problem

  — Prepare a brief report on your board's solution and reasoning

Worksheet 6 Case Problems 1,2,3,4,5,6

- Be sure to point out the opportunity to reach a different solution from those outlined, and encourage participants to do so.

- Direct participants to the case problem you want them to solve, and tell them how much time they will have to reach a conclusion.

2 min. for each report

- Ask for reports from discussion leaders. Specifically ask:

  — What individual approaches were observed in the board activity?

  — What values did the board members consider to be important to incorporate in their solution?

TIME		MATERIALS
	o Point out the suggestions following each case problem for future reference.	
	o Repeat the procedures above for other case situations.	
	o Using the transparency, review and discuss three strategies for managing conflict, including:	Trans. CO 13 Strategies
	— Win/Lose	
	— Bargaining	
	— Win/Win	
	o Discuss each of these in terms of:	
	— Outcomes and typical consequences	
	— Requirements of time, information, power and effort	
	o Refer to Idea Paper 5 for further reading and study.	Idea Paper 5 Strategies...

> Helpful Hint: This activity requires considerable time because of the level of participation involved. It is important to select the case studies you will have time to discuss in advance. Also, the workshop leader should circulate among the work groups in order to keep things moving along, and to gain insight into ideas being discussed. Finally, you might assign work groups to different case problems, in order to broaden the experience.

TIME		MATERIALS
Total Time: 30-60 min.	Activity 9: Application Clinic Leader Focus: This activity will afford participants an opportunity to apply some of the workshop ideas and skills to a conflict situation "back home." The purpose here is to give participants some time to think about a real conflict situation, to analyze it and to interact with other participants and with the workshop leader about possible solutions.	
	o Introduce the activity as an "application clinic" in which participants can get some assistance in addressing a "back home" conflict situation.	
	o Ask participants to complete Worksheet 7 in their booklet.	Worksheet 7
10 min. (5 min. each)	o Direct participants, working in pairs, to share their conflict situations. The listener should ask questions to help clarify the situation. There should be no effort at this point to find solutions to the conflict. Reverse roles.	
15-20 min. (5 min. for each person)	o Ask volunteers to explain their conflict situation to the total group. Ask for suggestions to resolve the conflict. Add your own ideas.	
	o Conclude the activity by summarizing the major points of discussion.	

TIME MATERIALS

Helpful Hint: For each conflict situation described, ask for a show of hands from all of those participants who have experienced this kind of conflict. This will help create a supportive atmosphere for open discussion of the problems.

This application clinic can be started and made more informal by simply asking volunteers to describe conflict situations in their district. The workshop leader can guide discussion toward suggestions for solutions.

Finally, you must be prepared to offer specific advice and suggestions for managing conflict situations which participants describe.

Activity 10: Workshop Summary and Evaluation

Leader Focus: This activity serves as a review of the key ideas and themes developed in the workshop. It points out the constructive and destructive potentials of conflict and underscores the importance of taking a proactive position in managing conflict.

- Using the transparencies, quickly review the major workshop themes and ideas. — Trans. CO 1-13
- Using the transparency, point out the destructive potentials of conflict. Emphasize that these outcomes are more likely when conflict is avoided and unmanaged. — Trans. CO 14 Destructive
- Using the transparency, point out the constructive potentials of conflict. Emphasize that these outcomes are more likely when conflict is approached from a proactive (in contrast to reactive) way, with a strong intention to manage it. — Trans. CO 15 Constructive

TIME	MATERIALS

- Ask participants to fill out and hand in the workshop evaluation form to you.
- Thank participants for their time and attention.
- Dismiss the participants.

SECTION 4: EVALUATING THE WORKSHOP

Evaluation of processes and materials has been a built-in feature of this workshop during its development and testing phase. As a workshop leader, you are encouraged to continue evaluating the workshop in order to find ways to improve it or modify it for your purposes.

Testing

Initial testing, carried out by the developers, focused on issues of appropriateness and match. Here, participants were asked to comment on:

- Language used in presentations and materials
- Clarity of objectives for activities
- Relevance of the topic for school boards
- Receptivity of participants to presentation styles, activities and materials

In later stages of development, other evaluation questions were asked of participants. These questions sought to gain feedback to workshop leaders about issues of:

- Adequacy of treatment of the topic
- Time allocations for various portions of the workshop
- Participants' ratings of the effectiveness of workshop leaders' presentations and of workshop activities and materials

The workshop received a consistent average rating of 4.35 on a 5.0 scale. Participants typically commented that the "hands on" experiences and the interaction with other board members were the most valuable aspects of the workshop.

Why Evaluate?

Continuous participant feedback to you as you present the workshop can be helpful in several ways:

- Personal growth and development. Whether you are new to workshop presentations or a seasoned veteran, participant feedback can be helpful in your personal and professional development. Participant evaluation of your presentation style, of how helpful you were in their learning, and of how you handle time and materials can be invaluable to you as a source of growth.

- Adapting the workshop. Participant feedback can give you ideas and suggestions which will be helpful to you in planning future presentations of the workshop. Perhaps more time needs to be spent in one area. Perhaps objectives need to be made clearer. Perhaps participants grew too tired during a two-hour evening presentation. These participant perceptions and feelings will provide information for you to consider as you continuously adapt and modify the workshop in successive presentations.

- Improving materials and activities. Participant feedback will give you clues as to how to improve upon the basic workshop structure and materials. Perhaps you will need to add more specific legal or statutory information about your state. Perhaps you will need to provide a description of the legislative process in your state, or a list of legislators and districts.

Again, participant feedback can be an important basis for decisions like these.

What to Evaluate

An adequate evaluation of a workshop provides you, as workshop leader, the kinds of information you need to determine how well the presentation achieved your objectives. It also gives you an indication of how well the presentation met the needs and expectations of participants.

- Objectives. The objectives of the workshop are stated in terms of knowledge/information which participants are expected to gain, skills they are expected to develop, or attitudes they are expected to have as a result of the experience.

  Evaluation of objectives can involve questions of clarity (Are the objectives clear to participants?), questions of appropriateness or match (Do the objectives meet participants' needs and expectations?) and questions of achievement (Do participants gain in information, skills and attitudes?).

  The first two kinds of questions are relatively easy to assess during the workshop. The third, while very important, is the most difficult to assess.

- Presenter. The skills of the presenter in conducting the workshop is another area for evaluation.

  Questions in this area might focus on the presenter's delivery of lecturettes, helpfulness in workshop activities, knowledge of the subject and other concerns.

- Workshop processes. These include the procedures and activities designed to result in learning. Among the workshop processes are lecturettes, small and large group discussions, quizzes and questionnaires.

  Evaluation of these processes involves questions regarding their contribution to participants' understanding, learning and skill development.

Questions for Evaluating This Workshop

The questions below are those included in the participant booklet for evaluation of presentations of this workshop. They represent a comprehensive and adequate set of workshop evaluation questions, speaking to objectives, presenter and processes.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP EVALUATION

Please answer the following questions. Your comments will assist the workshop leader in future presentations.

I am _____a board member _____a superintendent _____other_____
(specify)

1. My overall reaction to the conflict management workshop is:

Negative				Positive
1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

2. How clear were the workshop objectives?

Confusing				Clear
1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

3. How helpful were the lecturettes given by the workshop leader?

Unhelpful				Very Helpful
1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

4. How useful were the activities (styles instrument, case studies, etc.)?

Useless				Very Useful
1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

5. How helpful were the reading handouts?

Not helpful				Very Helpful
1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

6. What I would like more of in this workshop is...

7. What I would like less of in this workshop is...

8. Other comments and suggestions:

SECTION 5: CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Conflict Management for School Boards: A Concept Paper

Keats Garman, Senior Program Associate
Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

Introduction

School board decision making is more difficult than it used to be. The issues are complex, communities are more diverse, and the public is better educated and more desirous of participating in the process. Laws, statutes, and regulations are more numerous, special interest groups more sophisticated, and board members themselves are less willing to serve as passive members of "rubber stamp" boards. All of these factors and more mean that board decision making is more complex, controversial, and subject to conflict than in the past.

Conflict management skills, concepts, and procedures would seem to be an appropriate area for school board member inservice education. Recent research on citizen participation in schools confirms this need, finding that:

> School activists dislike conflict. They are uneasy about political parties, because, in part at least, partisan involvement implies directly competitive struggle. They are uneasy about changes within their communities or in their school program, in part it seems, because change represents the possibility of disagreement. They are, with some exceptions, uneasy in the presence of heterogeneity, or race or class, because this too means potential conflict over what values ought to prevail. (Salisbury, 1980, pp. 188-189).

Another study suggests that school superintendents may not be responding effectively to conflict situations because they continue to rely upon expertise as a power resource, rather than engaging in negotiations with the other parties to resolve conflict. The study concluded that:

> Superintendents in our small sample were more akin to planners than were (city) managers. The high value they placed upon technology made them less sensitive to the range of community values as expressed in the political process. Thus, when they were engaged in political decision making, they found conflict management more difficult than when the conflict was between professionals (Ziegler, et al. 1981).

Conflict: A Definition

Most definitions of conflict place emphasis upon the goal seeking and blocking behaviors of the antagonists. Thus,

> Conflict is the active striving for one's own preferred outcome, which, if attained, precludes the attainment by others of their own preferred outcome, thereby producing hostility (Likert and Likert, 1976).

For the purposes of this workshop, a less formal definition is used:

> Conflict results when the achievement of one party's objectives prevents others from achieving their objectives.

Conflict, whatever definition is employed, involves several important elements. These are:

- Two (or more) parties or factions
- Active striving for objectives
- Blocking strategies and behaviors
- Antagonism and hostility between the parties

Conflict should be distinguished from competition. Competition involves many of the elements above, but does not involve blocking behavior.

A 100-yard dash is an example of competition, since the participants try to win without obstructing or blocking others. A boxing match is closer to conflict, since winning involves blocking and obstructing the opponent.

Causes of Conflict

In an American Management Association survey of corporate executives and managers (Thomas and Schmidt, 1976), the following were identified as the typical causes of conflict:

- Misunderstanding (communication failure)
- Personality clashes
- Value and goal differences
- Substandard performance
- Differences over method
- Responsibility issues

- o Lack of Cooperation
- o Authority issues
- o Frustration and irritability
- o Competition for limited resources
- o Non-compliance with rules and policies

These same factors are causes of conflict in school settings as well and can involve school boards either directly or indirectly in conflict situations.

Conflict is caused by differences among people, and these differences can be of five kinds, as discussed below:

Causes	A Description	Some Examples
o Value Differences	The source of this kind of conflict is differences in moral, ideological, or philosophical outlook. They tend to be rooted in upbringing, education, and religious orientation. The more similar the value orientations that people have, the less likely that conflict situations based on moral, ideological, or philosophical issues will occur.	Those who want to reduce costs vs. those who want to expand the educational program Those who value the "basics" and those who want to provide many educational opportunities
o Role Pressures	Every office or job in an organization has a set of activities and expected behaviors. These "role expectations" help determine the part played by the person occupying the office. In any organization, conflicts arise over the roles people are expected to play. Managers are expected to manage, to take care of their departments, their goals, and the needs of people in their departments.	Those who respond directly to community pressures and parent complaints, rather than going through channels Boards and superintendents who haven't agreed on policy and administrators issues, and encroach upon each other's areas of responsibility

o Differences in the Way of Seeing Things	These differences in perception result from people having different experiences with similar situations. When people encounter new situations, they tend to experience them in ways that their past experience has shown to be most important.	Those who view student disciplinary procedures as "too soft" vs. those who see them as "humane"
o Divergent Goals	Divergent goals create problems that lead to additional pressures. Resources--time, money, people--in an organization are scarce. Under the pressures of competing for these resources, people sometimes interpret the organization's goals to support their own conflicting goals. This is especially true when the organization's goals are unclear or unstated.	Those who want to emphasize academics vs. those who want to emphasize sports and extracurricular activities
o Differences in Position or Status	Status is a form of recognition which can become a source of conflict if not supported by the organization. Conflict can occur when a person of lower status tries to initiate activity for a person of higher status, if instructions do not come down an acceptable chain of command, if the work is not considered to be in the job description, or if it is inconsistent with the lower status person's self-esteem.	New board members who want to change things vs. veterans who have a stake in how things are "Professional" vs. "Lay" distinction

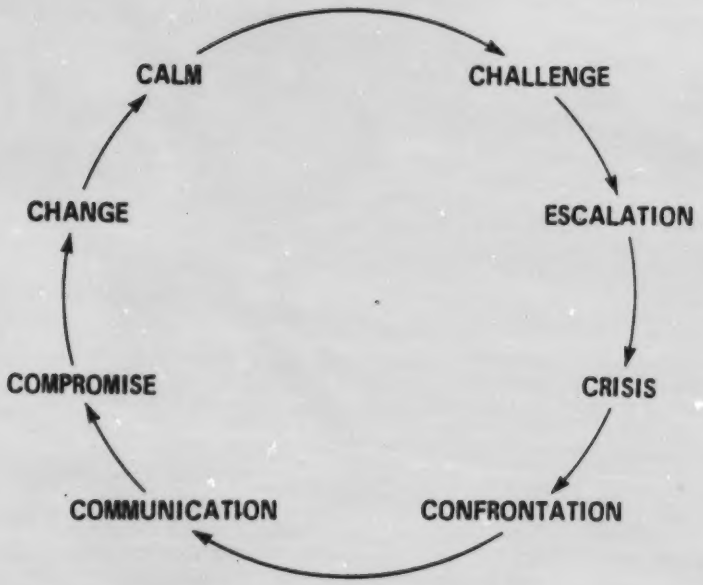
Conflict as a Process: The Conflict Cycle

Conflict can be usefully viewed as a process, a series of events, actions and reactions. Of course, each conflict situation is unique, and involves particular circumstances, actions and options for resolution. Still, at a general level, we see that conflict tends to follow a pattern, and if we understand the problem, we are better able to anticipate the direction that conflict will take.

The conflict cycle is described below as a sequence of events, leading from a period of calm to another, possibly very different period of calm. Like a tornado, conflict alters the familiar terrain in its passing. Calm returns, but things look differently, feel differently, are changed.

The following figure describes the conflict cycle; the events are described in more detail below.

CONFLICT CYCLE



Event 1: Calm

This period in the cycle is characterized by the status quo, smooth operations, and staff and community acceptance of board policies and administrative procedures.

Event 2: Challenge

Someone or some group challenges the status quo. Demands are made, policies are challenged, performance is questioned. The board may not attribute particular attention to the challenge at this point.

Event 3: Escalation

Now, more individuals and groups are involved and concerned. Factions and splits develop around the issues, the challenges, and the board. The conflict is joined and broadened. Avoidance is no longer an option.

Event 4: Crisis

Now the board realizes that immediate action is required. It can choose to stand on its authority, or to negotiate with the parties to the conflict. Something must be done, and soon.

Event 5: Confrontation

The board begins to recognize that some parts of the challengers' demands may be legitimate and deserve further attention. As this occurs, the challengers intensify and clarify their demands. The parties begin sorting out which demands will be given attention.

Event 6: Communication

The negotiation process has begun, and the board and its challengers are in face-to-face communication. Issues are clarified further, and give and take begins.

Event 7: Compromise

The board and its challengers reach agreement on the basic issues, resulting in gains and losses on each side. The agreement must often be taken back for "ratification" by other power sources, legal counsel, community leaders, etc.

Event 8: Change

Now the agreement begins to be carried out. This usually means that both parties will have a new working relationship, and will have to behave differently than in the past. Policies may be modified, procedures revised, and performance monitored. This begins a new period of calm.

It is important to understand that conflict is resolved only when the parties agree that it is resolved. Mutual agreement of the parties, therefore, is essential to a definition of "resolution" of the conflict. This fact places considerable importance upon the communication and negotiation process, since it is here that perceptions are changed, understandings developed, and agreements forged.

Levels of Board Conflict

A board can become involved with conflict at several levels, each requiring a somewhat different perspective and approach. First of all, conflict can result from differences among members of the board over goals, philosophy, means of achieving goals, or other similar issues. This internal conflict is sometimes resolved through discussion and compromise, but often through resignations or elections which change the makeup of the board itself.

Conflict involving the board can result from legislative regulation or court decisions which are incompatible with local board and community values.

Thus, the board is in a position of implementing policies with which it disagrees, or which may be unpopular among community and staff. This is an example of superordinate conflict, or conflict with parties of greater authority or power.

Conflict involving the board can result from demands by community interest groups. This is an example of lateral conflict, or conflict with individuals or groups over whom the board has no direct authority.

Finally, a board can become involved in conflict with administrators, teachers, or other employees over policies, procedures, priorities and many other issues. These situations involve the board in subordinate conflict, requiring it to exercise its authority.

The following table summarizes the levels of conflict and approaches appropriate to each.

Level	Approach	Example
Internal	Negotiation or power (voting)	Split board
Superordinate	Compliance	Court decision to integrate schools
Lateral	Negotiation, problem solving	Special interest group challege to curriculum
Subordinate	Negotiation, policy and procedure	Employee grievance

Individual Approaches to Conflict

Each of us has developed a unique approach to conflict situations. Our family backgrounds, upbringing, and experiences have helped to shape the way in which we respond to conflict.

Some of our responses may be innate--part of our biological heritage. Thus, we may be programmed biologically for a basic "flight-fight" response to danger. But as humans, we are also capable of more complex behaviors, some of which we learn, some of which we invent to respond to new circumstances.

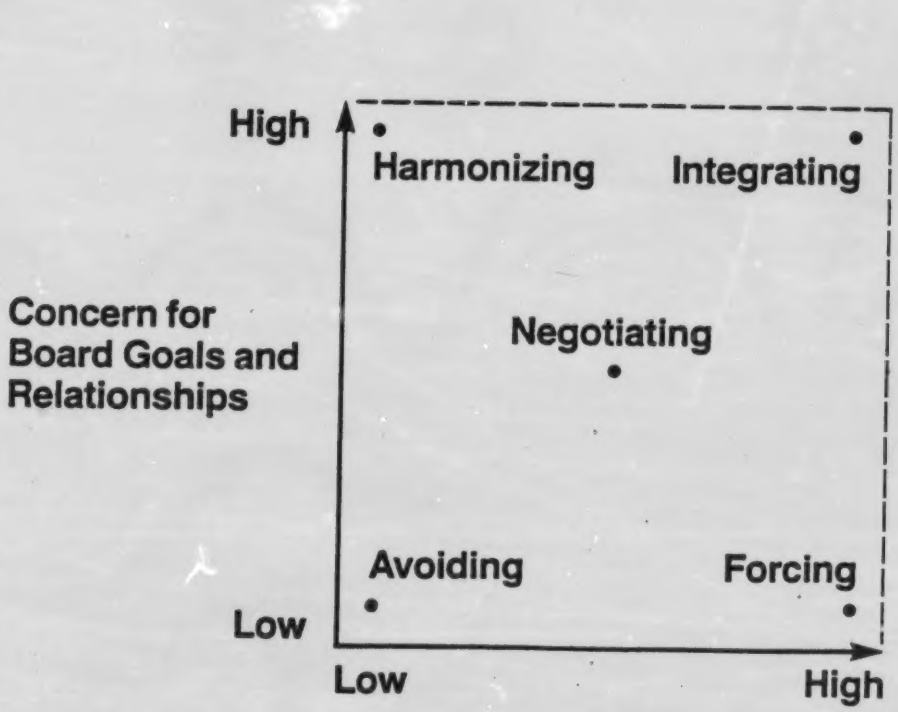
Five different approaches to conflict situations are discussed here. Each is not only a unique approach, but also each has a different consequence or impact, and each is appropriate in various conflict situations. Ideally, school board members would master all of the approaches, and become adept at employing them according to the requirements of the situation. Realistically, as psychologists tell us, the greater the pressure and stress, the more likely people are to fall back on a single, familiar behavior in response to the challenge.

When confronted with conflict, members of school boards must weigh two different kinds of values in formulating their position on the issue. One of these values is, "Where do I, as an individual, stand on the issue? What outcome to the conflict do I prefer, and how strongly do I feel about it?"

Another value which must be weighed by board members is that of the integrity, harmony, and cohesiveness of the board as a group. "How will working relationships, trust levels, communications, and feelings be affected if I push for my position? What is my responsibility for maintaining board unity in the conflict?"

These two value dimensions—the individual board member's concern for his or her own position, and the individual board member's concern for board unity on the issue—provide a framework for identifying five different approaches to conflict, shown in the figure below.

PERSONAL STYLES OF HANDLING CONFLICT



- In the avoiding approach, the board member makes a commitment to neither value. The member neither shows concern for his/her own position or preference, nor demonstrates concern for board unity or cohesion on the issue. The avoiding approach is passive, withdrawn, noncommittal.

- In the forcing approach, the board member feels strongly about his/her own position on the issue, and pushes forcefully for it. At the same time, the member shows little or no concern for others' viewpoints. The forcing approach is aimed at influencing others to the individual member's position.

- In the harmonizing approach, the board member is conciliatory, appeasing, and willing to go along with the majority position in the interest of board unity. If the member has a position on the issue, it is not clear. Rather, he or she seems most concerned with the harmonious working of the board.

- In the negotiating approach, the board member strikes a balance between his/her own position and that of others. The member is willing to compromise in order to preserve board unity.

- In the integrating approach, the board member pushes hard for board consensus on the issue. Here, the member takes a strong position on the issue and insists on a strong board position as well. He or she may propose new objectives which meet the needs of other members, too, and to which they can commit themselves.

In itself, each of these approaches has some strengths and some weaknesses. None is inherently "better" than another, although one might argue that avoiding has no place on a policy-making body such as a school board. Nevertheless, avoidance can be an appropriate approach for certain situations. The following chart shows some advantages and disadvantages of each approach.

FIVE APPROACHES TO CONFLICT

Styles	Advantages	Disadvantages
Forcing: Aimed at accomplishing one's preferred decision or course of action Use of power, rank, or persuasion Winning one's position over opposition Taking a position and pushing for it	When quick decisions are required, i.e., crisis situations When unpopular decisions are required, or unpopular rules need to be enforced When a more harmonious approach may be exploited by others	May strain relations with others, cause tension, hurt feelings May lead to win/lose outcomes May lower "ownership" in decisions, lead to lack of support
Harmonizing: Aimed at maintaining good relationships with others Sensitivity to others' feelings Trying to meet the other person's demands Smoothing over differences Yielding one's own position to others	When issue is far more important to the other person There is danger of losing your position You are interested in "trade offs" from the other person in the future When it is not the time for controversy	When a decision is necessary You will have trouble living up to the solution When yielding your position will cause you to feel badly When you know you're right
Negotiating: Aimed at achieving a compromise or middle ground Use of bargaining of gains and losses Involves give and take on the issues Is intermediate between forcing, harmonizing, integrating and dividing Requires good faith to be effective	When opponents are of equal strength, and committed to different goals An expedient and temporary solution is needed When other styles fail to solve the problem	Solutions are temporary Each party achieves only part of its goals Each party must give up some of its goals

Styles	Advantages	Disadvantages
Integrating: Aimed at finding a solution which meets the needs and goals of both parties Incorporates both goals/ tasks and human relations considerations Full examination of all concerns, ideas and feelings Requires openness and candid communication	When there is a readiness to grow and change When a unified approach is needed When maintenance of working relationships is important	When a quick solution is needed When parties are not willing to change When one party is likely to take advantage of the other's efforts
Avoiding: Aimed at staying out of the conflict situation Low involvement in either task or relationship concerns May involve withdrawing, changing subject, postponing the issue, or sidestepping the problem	When likely to be more harm than good resulting from the conflict When the conflict is a "no-win" situation When other business is really more important To postpone the conflict until a better time	Avoiding issues may make the board less effective Without full participation of all members, the board may make decisions without knowing all ideas and feelings

Strategies for Managing Conflict

Three broad strategies for managing conflict are presented and discussed below along with advantages and disadvantages of each. A basic assumption is made in this paper, and in the workshop, that management of conflict is often a more realistic approach than resolution. This is true because resolution of conflict means making it "go away." In order to truly resolve conflict, the root causes must be identified and changed. This is often beyond the power and the capability of those who are parties to the conflict. Management of conflict, on the other hand, means that the parties find ways to continue their working relationship despite their differences.

Strategies for Managing and Resolving Conflict

Strategy	Characteristics	Advantages	Disadvantages
Win/Lose	The win/lose approach is a struggle for dominance. One party or the other will come out on top in the conflict. In the long run, both parties may suffer because of the loss of trust. The win/lose approach is more likely to occur in an atmosphere of low trust, and will lower the trust level even more.	Quick May resolve conflict in short run	Lowers trust Long range consequences are not seen Destroys feeling of interdependence Can lead to "sabotage"
Negotiation or Wins and Losses	Negotiating a solution involves compromise. Each side attempts to give up as little as possible of what is important, while gaining as much as possible from the other party. Certain conditions must be present for successful negotiations: 1. Both parties must have reason to believe they will benefit from the outcome. 2. There must be enough trust that each side believes the other will live up to its end of the bargain.	Parties become more familiar with each others' priorities Opportunities for further conflict are reduced Sets precedents for future agreements	Risk that one party may not compromise Closer relationship can result in personality friction Negotiated agreements do not necessarily resolve the problem

Strategy	Characteristics	Advantages	Disadvantages
Negotiation (continued)	3. Neither has the power to force the other side to comply unwillingly. 4. At least one of the parties must be willing to propose negotiations and to indicate a willingness to push for an accommodation that is acceptable to both parties. 5. It requires an understanding of the constraints that the other party operates under. 6. The parties must enter the negotiations realizing that the solution may give them less than what they want, but without the risk of losing everything they want.		Agreements are temporary, and will need renegotiation in the future.
Problem Solving or Win/Win	Problem solving is an integrating approach to resolving conflict. If successful, a solution is found that meets the needs of both parties without sacrifice on either side. Problem-solving requires more information and a strong commitment to solve the problem, not just the conflict. It requires a high degree of trust and openness, as well as balanced power between the parties.	Conflict is treated creatively Common goals identified Trust increases Underlying problems may be solved for long term	Requires time Requires stress to develop trust Requires wide base of shared information

Assumptions About Conflict

The attitudes and assumptions people hold about conflict can influence how they approach a conflict situation and the outcome of it.

According to Blake, Shepard and Mouton (1964), there are three basic assumptions people can hold about intergroup conflict:

1. Conflict is inevitable; agreement is impossible.
2. Conflict is not inevitable, yet agreement is impossible.
3. Although there is conflict, agreement is possible.

These assumptions lead to predictible behavior in managing conflict situations, depending on how important the "stakes" or outcomes are to those involved. The following figure illustrates this:

	Conflict Inevitable, Agreement Impossible	Conflict Not Inevitable Yet Agreement Not Possible	Although There Is Conflict, Agreement Is Possible
ACTIVE ↑	Win/Lose Power Struggle	Withdrawal	Problem-Solving
	Third-Party Intervention	Isolation	Splitting the Difference (Compromise, Bargaining, etc.) Mediation
↓ PASSIVE	Fate	Indifference or Ignorance	Peaceful Coexistence ("Smoothing Over")

HIGH STAKES ↑ MODERATE STAKES ↓ LOW STAKES

FIGURE 2

BASIC ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT CONFLICT
AND PREDICTABLE BEHAVIORS

As illustrated in Figure 2, if people think that conflict is inevitable, but agreement is impossible, their behavior will range from being passive to very active. When the stakes are low, they will tend to be passive and willing to let fate (like a flip of a coin) decide the conflict. When the stakes are moderate, they will permit a third party judgment to decide the conflict. And, finally, when the stakes are high they will actively engage in a win-lose confrontation or power struggle.

If people think that conflict is not inevitable, yet if it occurs, agreement is impossible, they will be passive and indifferent if the stakes are low. When the stakes are moderate, they will isolate themselves from such a conflict situation. And when the stakes are high and they find themselves actively involved, they will eventually withdraw.

If people think that although there is conflict, agreement is possible, they will be passive and attempt to smooth over the situation when the stakes are low. When the stakes are moderate, they will engage in bargaining or some form of negotiation. And if the stakes are high, they will actively engage in problem solving.

Conclusion

This paper has presented many ideas about conflict which will be helpful to leaders as they present the conflict management workshop. Suggestions about how to present and discuss these ideas in the workshop are found in the Leader's Guide section of this package.

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BOARD-SUPERINTENDENT CONFLICT: CAUSES AND SOLUTIONS*

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Conflict between school board members and their superintendent can become a serious problem if it is not recognized early, and if steps are not taken to alleviate it. Board-superintendent conflict may result in staff and public confusion about the direction of the school system, bitter division with the board over recommendations made by the superintendent, and a loss of quality in the education program.

What Causes Board-Superintendent Conflict?

Even a normal and healthy working relationship between the school board and its superintendent involves certain dynamic tensions. There are, for example, differences in background between the citizen board member and the professional educator. Board members and professionals speak different languages. The line between the policy role of the board and the administrative role of the superintendent is often unclear.

Boards and superintendents with a good working relationship have learned to handle this natural tension and the minor misunderstandings and conflicts it causes. More serious conflict can result from the actions and attitudes of both superintendents and board members.

The superintendent can contribute to conflict with the board in the following areas:

1. Communications
   - o Not keeping the board informed
   - o Not being well informed or prepared during board meetings
   - o Making public statements before informing the board
   - o Being inaccessible to the public
   - o Surprising the board with new information
2. Leadership
   - o Being too political
   - o Employing poor management practices
   - o Failing to follow board direction

*Information based upon clinic session at 1980 NSBA Convention, San Francisco, conducted by Dr. George Brain and Dr. Carroll Johnson.

- o Unwillingness to make unpopular recommendations
- o Failure to present alternatives in an objective way

3. Trust and Confidence

- o Treating board members unequally
- o Failing to recognize board members
- o Having a "hidden agenda"
- o Failing to show loyalty and support to the board
- o Failing to be open with the board

Board members can contribute to conflict with the superintendent in the following areas:

1. Communications

- o Surprising superintendent with new information at board meetings
- o Failing to be open with the superintendent
- o Lacking procedure for handling complaints and grievances

2. Leadership

- o Encroaching in administrative areas
- o Acting as individuals in board matters
- o Lacking willingness to approve personnel recommendations
- o Lacking of officers' skill in leading meetings
- o Failing to set goals

3. Trust and Confidence

- o Failing to keep executive session deliberations confidential
- o Harboring hidden agendas
- o Failing to be prepared for meetings and decisions
- o Attacking the superintendent
- o Finding ways to circumvent superintendent in communicating with staff
- o Lacking willingness to act on tough issues

What Can Be Done to Resolve and Manage Board-Superintendent Conflict?

Identification and acknowledgement of specific problems in the board-superintendent working relationship is the first step in improving it. If this can be done before conflicts become serious, the improvement can be made in a constructive way.

Regular assessment and taking stock of the working relationship can result in early identification of areas for improvement.

The superintendent can alleviate conflict with the board by:

- Treating all board members as equals, without showing favoritism
- Providing board members with accurate and timely information, and keeping them informed
- Showing trust in the board's judgment
- Being open and honest with the board
- Presenting alternatives objectively

Board members can reduce conflict with the superintendent by:

- Coming to an understanding and agreement about policy/administrative areas
- Doing their homework
- Communicating openly with the superintendent, including expectations for performance
- Showing trust in the superintendent

Boards and their superintendents have found that worksessions in a retreat setting provide a good opportunity for a thorough review and candid discussion of their working relationships. Improvement begins with setting new goals and establishing new agreements about the relationship.

Alternatives to Blowing a Fuse

A Workshop

KEYS TO SCHOOL BOARDSMANSHIP

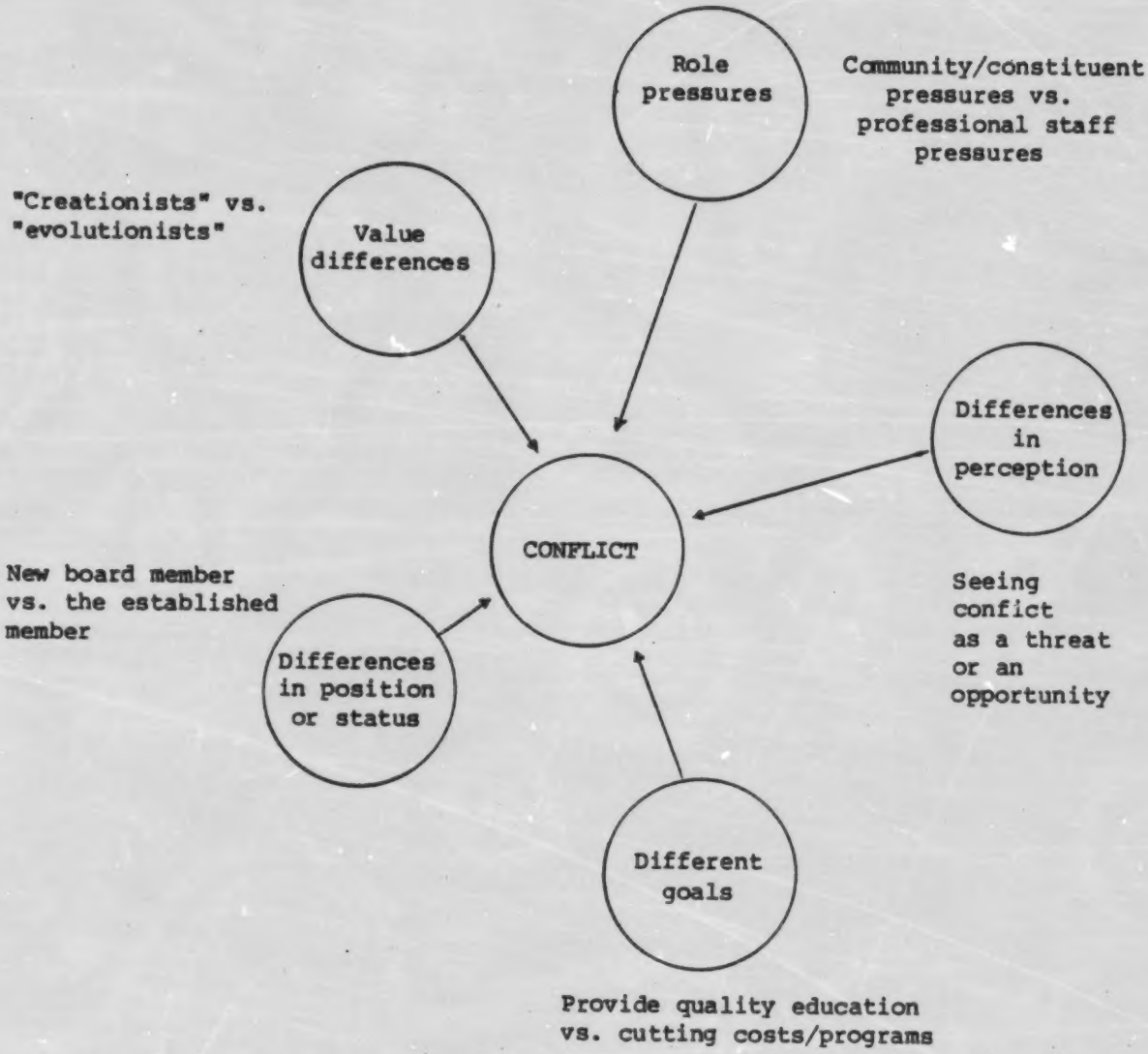
WORKSHEET 1: WHAT CONFLICT MEANS

Part 1: In the space below, write in some words or ideas that you associate with the term "conflict."

Part 2: Try to develop a concise definition for "conflict."

Conflict is. . .

IDEA PAPER 1: FIVE CAUSES OF CONFLICT


Role pressures
Community/constituent pressures vs. professional staff pressures
"Creationists" vs. "evolutionists"
Value differences
Differences in perception
CONFLICT
New board member vs. the established member
Seeing confict as a threat or an opportunity
Differences in position or status
Different goals
Provide quality education vs. cutting costs/programs

While these are all single and separate causes, they are often all present in conflict situations and act upon each other to heighten the conflict.

A Discussion of the Five Causes of Conflict

Value Differences. These are differences in belief, in philosophy, in religion, or orientation to life. Because they are part of our basic makeup, they are very difficult to change or negotiate. Some examples include:

- Creationism vs. evolutionism controversy
- "Back to the basics" movement
- Conservative vs. liberal orientation to role of the federal government in education

Differences in Perception. Sometimes, we view the same event or even "facts" differently, because of differences in our background and experiences. These differences can lead to conflict, because our perceptions influence our judgment and decision making.

Some examples include:

- Viewing conflict as threatening vs. viewing it as a challenge
- Viewing school discipline as "too soft" vs. viewing it as "humane"
- Viewing a school budget as a management tool vs. viewing it as an allocation of priorities

Differences in Goals. Differences in goals is a typical cause of conflict because we often cannot achieve all goals, and because going in one direction often precludes another direction.

Some examples include:

- Emphasizing the "basics" vs. emphasizing academic programs
- Emphasizing academic programs vs. emphasizing sports and extracurricular activities
- Conserving resources vs. expanding programs, staff and activities

Differences in Status or Position. These differences can cause conflict because of expectations we attach to positions. A person in a higher position may feel threatened if someone in a lower status position tries to initiate change. Conflict can arise if the established channels of communication are not used, if activities are not considered part of a job description.

Some examples include:

- New board member with "axe to grind"
- Making promises or commitments as an individual board member
- Circumventing the channels of communication so that board or superintendent is surprised by information on concerns

Role Pressures. These are similar to differences in position or status, because they involve expectations for who is to do what. In a school system, teachers are expected to teach, administrators to manage, and the board to set policies. While these are general "role expectations," confusion and conflict often result from the realities of carrying out these roles.

Some examples include:

- Board members who respond individually to parent and community concerns
- Administrators who formulate policies from their own point of view
- Board or administrator encroachment in the other's domain

IDEA PAPER 2: DYNAMICS IN CONFLICT

In conflict situations, some powerful group dynamics can come into play which make the conflict more difficult to manage and resolve. Some of these dynamics are described here.

- Righteousness. Parties to the conflict feel that their position is right, on the basis of philosophy, law, authority, power, or other reasons. This attitude, which often hardens as the conflict progresses, makes negotiation or compromise more difficult.

- Entrenchment. As the conflict progresses, each party becomes more committed to its position. As this occurs, its ability to hear the other side or consider alternatives is diminished.

- Peer Pressure. Individual members of parties to the conflict exert influence upon other members to "hang tough," to stick with the position, and not to "cave in." Peer pressure reinforces the entrenchment process.

- Escalation. As the conflict continues, each party may raise the stakes or increase the threats against the other. In addition, other individuals and groups may take sides in the dispute, adding their voices, numbers, and "clout" to the situation. This makes it more difficult for the original parties to change positions or negotiate their differences.

WORKSHEET 2: CONFLICT APPROACHES QUESTIONNAIRE

When Conflict Arises on the Board. . .

1. a I push hard to achieve my goals.
   b I try to consider the other person's concerns and goals, as well as my own.

2. a I try to see things from the other person's point of view.
   b I try to strike a balance of "wins and losses" with the other person.

3. a I try hard not to hurt the other person's feelings.
   b I try to understand all of the other person's concerns and goals.

4. a I try to propose a compromise solution that both of us can agree to.
   b I put off dealing with the conflict until I've had a chance to think about it.

5. a I try hard to influence others to accept my position.
   b I try to find the middle ground, where the other person and I can agree.

6. a I try to deal with all of the other person's concerns and goals as well as my own.
   b I try to avoid situations in which there is anger and hostility.

7. a I try to persuade the other person to see the positive side of things.
   b I try to find a middle ground where the other person and I can agree.

8. a I often acquiesce in order to maintain a good relationship with the other person.
   b I am firm in pursuing my goals and ideas.

9. a I do whatever I can to demonstrate the advantages of my position.
   b I try not to get involved in controversies with others.

10. a I believe it is important to maintain good relations with the other person in resolving our differences.
    b I give in rather than hurt the other person's feelings.

11. a I try to get the other person to see the things on which we agree.
    b I try not to get involved in controversies with others.

12. a I let others deal with the difficult and controversial issues.
    b I try hard to maintain positive relations with the other person.

13. a Winning my position is more important than maintaining positive relations with others.
    b Consensus or agreement is more important than winning my own position.

14. a I am willing to give on some points if the other person does too.
    b I do whatever I can to demonstrate the advantages of my position.

15. a I stay away from situations in which there is anger and hostility.
    b I try to achieve my goals regardless of the other's feelings.

16. a I avoid topics that provoke disagreement and controversy.
    b I try to see things from the other person's point of view.

17. a I am willing to reveal all of my concerns and ideas in order to come to agreement with the other person.
    b I push hard to achieve my goals.

18. a I try to find the middle ground where we can both agree.
    b I am willing to reveal all of my concerns and ideas in order to come to agreement with the other person.

19. a I put off dealing with conflict until I've had a chance to think about it.
    b I try to strike a balance of "wins and losses" with the other person.

20. a I believe it is better to reach a compromise than to let the conflict go on.
    b I usually concede if the other person feels more strongly about the issue.

WORKSHEET 3: SCORING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Instructions: Working from your answers in the questionnaire, circle the answer (a or b) in the chart below. Add the circled items for each column to get your scores.

Pair No.					
1	a			b	
2			b	a	
3		a		b	
4			a		b
5	a		b		
6				a	b
7		a	b		
8	b	a			
9	a				b
10		b		a	
11		a			b
12		b			a
13	a	b			
14	b		a		
15	b				a
16				b	a
17	b			a	
18			a	b	
19			b		a
20		b	a		
Column Total (a and b)	Forcing	Harmonizing	Negotiating	Integrating	Avoiding

WORKSHEET 4: GRAPHING YOUR CONFLICT HANDLING STYLES

Instructions: Your scores for the conflict handling styles will probably be mixed. Some will be high and some low. In order to develop a profile of your styles, circle your score for each in the chart below, then draw a line between each circle.

	Forcing	Harmonizing	Negotiating	Integrating	Avoiding
High	8	8	8	8	8
	7	7	7	7	7
	6	6	6	6	6
Mid	5	5	5	5	5
	4	4	4	4	4
	3	3	3	3	3
	2	2	2	2	2
	1	1	1	1	1
Low	0	0	0	0	0

IDEA PAPER 3: FIVE APPROACHES TO HANDLING CONFLICT

A conflict handling approach is the attitudes and behaviors we rely upon when faced with a conflict situation.

Through background and previous experiences, most of us have developed an approach which we prefer and are most comfortable with as we face conflict.

Clearly, two issues are at stake in conflict situations. One of these is the relationship between the parties. Will it continue to be a friendly and supportive working relationship? Or will the conflict strain and perhaps even destroy the relationship? The other issue involves reaching our own goals and establishing our own position. Will the conflict result in one party not achieving its goals? If I don't achieve my goals, how will this affect my position on the board? With my constituents?

How we deal with these two issues in conflict situations determines our conflict handling approach.

The Five Approaches

The five approaches described here have a different relationship to the issues of concern for relationships and concern for goals/position.

- The Forcing Approach is high in its concern for accomplishing goals and establishing position, but low in its concern for feelings and smooth working relationships. The forcing style is assertive, aggressive and competitive.

- The Harmonizing Approach is opposite from forcing. Here, the concern for people, feelings, and smooth working relationships is high, while concern for goals and position is low. The harmonizing style is one of accommodating, giving in, and acquiescing in order to preserve relationships in resolving the conflict.

- The Negotiating Approach is moderate in its concern for both relationships and for goals and position. It is a "middle ground" style, aimed at achieving compromise in order to resolve the conflict.

- The Integrating Approach is high on both concern for relationships and concern for goals. It is aimed at finding a new set of goals which incorporate those of both parties, and which lead to growth in the working relationship. The integrating style stresses collaboration and problem solving to resolve the conflict.

- The Avoiding Approach is the opposite of integrating. It is low on both concern for relationships and concern for goals. Avoiding is aimed at not becoming involved with conflict and the strong feelings it may generate.

Each of these approaches has its advantages and disadvantages, its strengths and weaknesses. In itself, no one style is "better" than another. However, each approach has a different thrust and different consequences.

Constructive conflict management calls for the ability to read the situation and bring to it a useful approach. This means that we should strive to develop our abilities and skills in all five approaches, rather than to rely on only one.

Likewise, different stages of the conflict call for different approaches. In the initial stages of bargaining, for example, both parties are likely to use a forcing style in order to establish the issues in which they are most interested. Later on, as bargaining continues, each party will have to assume a negotiating style if a compromise is to be reached.

IDEA PAPER 4: YOUR APPROACH TO CONFLICT—FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Listed below are several questions to consider for each of the approaches to conflict. Identify the approach you use most often and least often and think about these questions. You may wish to explore new approaches to handling conflict.

Approach	High Use	Low Use
Forcing	Do other board members agree with me too often or too much?	Do I get my way often enough? Are others hearing my position?
	Do I do too much of the board's work for it?	Am I too concerned about the other board members' feelings?
	Am I getting all of the ideas and feelings of other board members?	Am I using the power and resources I really have?
Harmonizing	Do I yield too much or too often to others' ideas and proposals?	When I'm wrong, is it hard for me to admit it and change my position?
	Do I feel that unanimous decisions are always necessary?	Do other board members see me as difficult and unreasonable?
	Do we spend too much time on feelings and good relations, at the expense of making the decision?	Are other board members reluctant to share their ideas and feelings with me?
Negotiating	Do I get so involved in the process of negotiation that I lose sight of my own goals?	Is it hard for me to make trade-offs with other board members?
	Am I prepared to accept the compromise as a temporary solution?	Do I take negotiation too personally, instead of as a way of making decisions?

Situation 1

THE CHALLENGER

As a result of recent elections, a new member has joined your board. This person was elected because of changes he wants to make in the district. Specifically, he wants to place greater emphasis upon the "basics" in all phases of the instructional program. He has hinted that "if this takes getting rid of the superintendent and some teachers, then that's what we'll do!"

You and other members of the board hired the superintendent two years ago because of his strengths in instructional leadership. At that time, the board wanted to broaden the district program to include career education and more elective offerings for college bound kids.

Question: How to handle the challenger?

	My Choice	Board Choice
A. Ignore him, believing that in time he will "get the message," and come more in line with you and the other board members.		
B. Make it clear to him that you disagree with his position, will work to see that he is "outgunned" on critical voting.		
C. Move to reassess board priorities in instruction, allowing the new member the opportunity to have his say.		
D. Move to direct the superintendent to conduct an assessment of student achievement and career goals, hoping that these will put to rest the new board member's concerns.		
E. Other.		

Conflict and New Board Members

Because of increasing rates of board member turnover, and because an increasing number of candidates appear to be running on a single issue, school boards and superintendents need to concern themselves more than ever with orientation of new board members.

New school board members may exhibit some of the following characteristics:

- Difficulty in making decisions
- Confusion in regards to policy and administrative decisions
- Confusion in carrying out the role of a board member, instead of a citizen or school patron
- Orientation to the present, without a sense of the past or needs of the future
- Anxious to make changes without having all of the facts
- Lack of awareness of the proper lines of communication
- Encourage citizens to call them with concerns and grievances, with the expectation that he or she will take care of them

Orientation of new members can help greatly to reduce the confusion and potential conflict that may result from uninformed action.

A policy statement regarding orientation of new members is helpful. The board president, the superintendent, and other administrators can play helpful roles in orientation. Orientation sessions by your state school boards association are another valuable experience for new board members.

The new member should be provided with information regarding school board policies, bylaws, long range plans, procedures for handling community concerns, and the district budget, among other items.

Often, a retreat or working session away from the pressures of district activities is an excellent way for the new member, the "veterans," and administrators to get acquainted, become familiar with one another's viewpoints, and share ideas for the future.

Situation 2

COMMUNITY PRESSURES

In a community-wide survey conducted for the purpose of establishing and prioritizing educational goals, surprisingly large numbers of parents commented strongly that some of the goals were not the business of the school, but belonged in the home. An example of one of the offending statements is:

"Understand and practice the skills of family living."

While about 15% of the responding parents made such comments, several board members are concerned that these represent a vocal minority growing in strength.

Question: What to do about district goals?

	My Choice	Board Choice
A. Move to hold community hearings to explain the district goals.		
B. Move to remove the offending statements from the list of district goals.		
C. Proceed to adopt the goals, and take whatever criticism may be directed at the board.		
D. Direct the staff to make the goal statement more specific.		
E. Other.		

Managing Community Conflict and Controversy

Managing community conflict during difficult or controversial decisions is increasingly experienced by school board members.

Some of these difficult and controversial decisions include:

- School closures, to deal with declining enrollments
- Budget/program cuts due to fiscal recisions at the federal, state or local level
- Reductions in force, due to similar needs as above
- Establishing controversial programs, such as sex education

- Responding to concerns about curriculum, textbooks, library materials, and other value-laden school issues

The process of community conflict usually follows a pattern something like the following:

- Challenge. This involves the public (and sometimes dramatic) presentation of demands by a special interest group. The challenge may be accompanied by unusual attendance at board meetings. Other examples include sit-ins, picketing, lawsuits, boycotts, or media campaigns designed to bring wider public attention to the issue.

- Escalation. Challenges accumulate and intensify as the wider community becomes concerned and involved. Conflict may surface among community groups, as well as between them and the school board and administration. The usual methods of control are no longer capable of containing and managing the conflict.

- Crisis. When the board and administration and sometimes other community decision makers define the situation as requiring immediate action and resolution, the conflict has reached the crisis stage.

- Confrontation. When decision makers begin recognizing that the interest group has some legitimate demands which must be dealt with, the conflict has reached the confrontation stage of the process.

- Communication. When direct, face-to-face negotiation between the challengers and the decision makers begins, the communication stage has been reached.

- Compromise. Results from negotiations in the previous stage. The compromise often requires endorsement and legitimate support from powerful sources beyond the immediate parties to the negotiations. Compromise results in gains and concessions for all the parties in negotiations.

- Change. Results from the new agreements embodied in the compromise. Each party now will have to do some things differently.

The School Board As "Power Broker"

Because a school board represents the interests of the entire community, the public interest rather than private or special interests, how it handles community conflict and controversy are of extreme importance.

While the board has the final decision in matters of local educational policy, it can exercise leadership during times of community conflict in order to build a new community consensus regarding the resolution of the issues at hand.

The board as "power broker" communicates with all interested parties to the conflict, convenes those parties which need to negotiate their differences, formulates proposals for resolving the issues, and finally decides the issues to reflect the new consensus.

Situation 3

PARENT'S COMPLAINT

The parents of a good student, a generally responsible youngster, have come to you with complaints about the teachings of a social studies teacher. They claim the teacher is using biased materials and giving slanted opinions in his classes. Further, they claim that when their child tried to question the materials and opinions, she was greeted with sarcasm and threats of having her grade lowered. The matter is further complicated by the father's strong influence in the community, and he demands evidence of action immediately.

Question: What action do you take?

	My Choice	Board Choice
A. Agree with the parents that the teacher is wrong and indicate that you will contact the teacher and apply censure in some form.		
B. Call the building principal and have the child transferred into another classroom with a teacher whose techniques and methods are well known to you, knowing this will placate the parents.		
C. Call the superintendent and ask for some corroboration of the incidents; then proceed with action.		
D. Assist the parents in making an appointment with the superintendent and advise them that if the problem is not resolved to their satisfaction they have the right to appear before the board of education at its next regular meeting.		
E. Other.		

Handling Complaints and Grievances

Clear understanding of the proper channels for handling complaints and grievances is essential in managing these kinds of conflicts. While many of these can be resolved at the administrative level, some of the more controversial ones may put the board in the role of making the final decision.

The board should adopt a policy statement regarding complaints and grievances, and administrative procedures should be clearly understood and mutually agreed upon by board, superintendent and administrative staff.

Such procedures might include some of the following suggestions:

- Complaints and grievances will be filed in writing.
- Written complaints and grievances will be specific with respect to the incident in question, dates, times, people involved, and actions taken.
- Complaints and grievances will be submitted to the superintendent.
- At his/her discretion, the superintendent may refer the complaint or grievance to the board for action.
- The superintendent will keep the board thoroughly informed regarding the status of the complaint.

Situation 4

DISRUPTIVE BOARD MEETING

On the school board agenda tonight is a proposal to submit a bond issue to the voters soon. Much careful and cautious planning will be required, accompanied by frank discussion. The board chair has just learned that an angry, militant group of taxpayers plans to attend and disrupt the meeting. His best course of action is to:

	My Choice	Board Choice
A. Cancel the scheduled meeting and have the board meet privately at an unannounced secluded site.		
B. Meet as scheduled, permit registered visitors to speak at designated times only, use police enforcement if necessary.		
C. Meet as scheduled but call an executive session and clear the room to discuss the bond issue.		
D. Call all of the board members and discuss the bond issue before the meeting. If possible, reach agreement so the board will be unified when the subject comes up during the meeting.		
E. Other.		

Managing Conflict at Meetings

Open meetings or "Sunshine" laws provide for meetings in a public setting, in order that members of the public can observe policy making deliberations, and have access to those responsible for public policy. These laws do not call for public or townhall-type meetings of the board. In its procedures, the board may provide opportunities for public input at its meetings. In addition, the board may limit the numbers of speakers and time allowed for each presentation.

As a public policy-making body, the board should strive to project an image of receptivity, of fairness, of neutrality, and of determination, to make the best possible decisions.

In times of controversy and conflict, careful planning, rehearsal, and execution of the board meeting agenda is advisable. Here are some suggestions:

- If public comment is sought during the meeting, be sure that spokesmen for both sides of the issue have an opportunity to speak.
- If a large number of people are in attendance, limit the number of spokesmen for both sides of the isrue.
- Consider limiting the time each spokesman has for comments.
- Require that individuals register or sign up as spokesmen.
- Consider tape recording the public comment portion of the meeting for future reference.
- Consider the need for security at the meeting. If violence is clearly a possibility, provide for visible police presence.
- Encourage the board chairman to run the meeting in an even-handed but firm fashion.
- If those present become unruly or fail to follow the established procedures, recess the meeting.

Situation 5

WHO TO HIRE?

After a thorough search and screening of candidates for a building principal's position in your district, your superintendent has a recommendation. Of two finalists for the position, one is a long-term district employee, serving as assistant principal for the last three years. The other is a woman from outside the district, who has served as principal for two years. Your superintendent recommends the outsider, citing the desirability of having a balanced staff at the high school, as well as her competence. Two board members take issue with the superintendent. They argue that the insider is known, trusted, and has been preparing to take this position for several years.

Question: What action do you take?

	My Choice	Board Choice
A. Hire neither candidate, since there is disagreement between the superintendent and two board members.		
B. Hire the insider, following the reasoning of the dissenting board members.		
C. Hire the outsider, following the recommendation of the superintendent.		
D. Interview both candidates to determine which one to hire.		
E. Other.		

Managing Board/Superintendent Conflict

Conflict between a board and its superintendent can usually be traced to a few basic causes:

Failure to communicate

The superintendent can contribute to conflict with the board by failing to share information, being unprepared at board meetings, making public statements before informing the board, and surprising the board with new information.

Board members can contribute to this conflict by surprising the superintendent with new information, failing to be open and candid, and mishandling complaints and grievances.

Failure to Provide Leadership

Superintendents can contribute to conflict by employing poor management practices, failing to follow board direction, lacking willingness to make unpopular recommendations, and failing to present alternatives in an objective manner.

Board members can contribute to conflict by encroaching in administrative areas, acting as individuals in board matters, lacking resolve to act on tough issues, and exhibiting inadequate skills in leading meetings.

Trust and Confidence

Superintendents and board members can contribute to conflict with one another by harboring "hidden agendas," failing to show loyalty and support, circumventing each other, and failing to be open and candid with one another.

Superintendents and board members can alleviate and manage conflict with one another by continuously working at improvements in their working relationship. Some of the following suggestions may be useful to consider.

- Hold a retreat or worksession at least annually to review progress, consider ideas for the future, and get better acquainted. Held away from the everyday pressures and interruptions, these worksessions provide a good opportunity to clarify misunderstandings, establish better communication, and share concerns.

- Provide each other with accurate and timely information. Be prepared at board meetings for the discussion and decisions required.

- Consider alternatives for important decisions carefully and objectively.

- Spend time discussing board and administrative roles, relationships, and expectations.

- Accept some degree of dynamic tension between board and superintendent as normal and healthy. Strong school systems are led by strong boards and strong superintendents.

Situation 6

SPLIT BOARD

A seven member board has had a recent history of a four-three split in voting. The board is debating an umbrella motion containing recommendations for the award of six bids.

One board member (of the minority faction) takes issue with the recommendation of award of a bid for what she calls "junk foods." Two other board members (of the majority faction) take issue with a recommendation to purchase an "extravagantly priced" musical instrument.

As the debate continues, it becomes clear that neither side will be persuaded by the arguments of the other.

Finally, the chairman calls for a vote on the umbrella motion, and the board, with one member absent, deadlocks in a three-to-three vote.

What would you do?

	My Choice	Board Choice
A. Move to vote on the bid recommendations separately.		
B. Move to table the umbrella motion until the seventh member returns.		
C. Approach the disagreeing board members individually at a break and encourage them to change their vote on the umbrella motion. In exchange, offer your vote on some future issue.		
D. Consider changing your vote on the motion in order to resolve the deadlock.		
E. Other action.		

Divided Board or Split Decision?

The difference between a divided board and a board which makes a split decision is an important difference.

A divided board is one with long standing factions. Members of each faction make their decisions in predictable ways--to support their particular faction. Board factions can be based on political philosophy (progressive/conservative), or characteristics of the community (town/gown; city/country; labor/management; newcomer/old timer).

A split decision, on the other hand, sometimes results from an honest difference among individual board members. They simply see the issue differently and disagree. The decision is split because one, two, or more members vote differently from the others. On other issues, the members may all agree, or may again disagree, but the voting pattern will be different.

Divided boards and split decisions are different in other important ways, too. Divided boards, where block or factioned voting takes place, may not be representing the public particularly well. There will always be "winners" and "losers" in board voting, and probably bitterness and hard feelings on the part of the losers. A superintendent trying to work with a divided board will probably feel insecure and vulnerable.

On the other hand, split voting resulting from honest differences among individual board members is a sign of a healthy democratic process. The public can feel better represented when there is diversity of viewpoint in board action. If individual board members can "agree to disagree," then winning and losing are more acceptable consequences; and those who lost today's issue may well win in tomorrow's.

A superintendent can be a better and more objective advisor to the board when there is no need to be concerned about blocks and factions.

IDEA PAPER 5: STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING AND RESOLVING CONFLICT

Strategy	Characteristics	Advantages	Disadvantages
Win/Lose	The win/lose approach is a struggle for dominance. One party or the other will come out on top in the conflict. In the long run, both parties may suffer because of the loss of trust. The win/lose approach is more likely to occur in an atmosphere of low trust, and will lower the trust level even more.	Quick May resolve conflict in short run Useful when "stakes" are not high	Lowers trust Long range consequences are not seen Destroys feeling of interdependence Can lead to "sabotage"
Negotiating, Bargaining	Negotiating a solution involves compromise. Each side attempts to give up as little as possible of what is important, while gaining as much as possible from the other party. "Good faith" is a necessary condition for successfully reaching solutions.	Parties become more familiar with each others' priorities Opportunities for further conflict are reduced Sets precedent for future	Risk that one party may not compromise Closer relationship can result in personality friction Negotiated agreements do not necessarily resolve the problem Agreements are temporary, and will need renegotiation in the future
Problem Solving	Problem solving is an integrating approach to resolving conflict. If successful, a solution is found that meets the needs of both parties without sacrifice on either side. Problem-solving requires more information and a strong commitment to solve the problem, not just the conflict. It requires a high degree of trust and openness, as well as balanced power between the parties.	Conflict is treated creatively Common goals identified Trust increases Underlying problems may be solved for long term	Requires time Requires stress to develop trust Requires wide base of shared information

WORKSHEET 7: A BACK HOME CONFLICT SITUATION

Directions: Thinking about a conflict situation in your school district to which the board is a party, or in which the board has a stake, answer the following questions:

- What is the situation?

  — What seems to be the cause?

  — Who's involved?

  — At what stage in the conflict cycle?

- What solutions have been proposed or tried so far? With what success?

- The conflict would be considered by all to be resolved or managed if . . .

- Other suggestions for solutions:

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP EVALUATION

Please answer the following questions. Your comments will assist the workshop leader in future presentations.

I am _____a board member _____a superintendent _____other_____
(specify)

1. My overall reaction to the conflict management workshop is:

Negative				Positive
1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

2. How clear were the workshop objectives?

Confusing				Clear
1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

3. How helpful were the lecturettes given by the workshop leader?

Unhelpful				Very Helpful
1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

4. How useful were the activities (styles instrument, case studies, etc.)?

Useless				Very Useful
1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

5. How helpful were the reading handouts?

Not helpful				Very Helpful
1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

6. What I would like more of in this workshop is...

7. What I would like less of in this workshop is...

8. Other comments and suggestions:

RELATED TRANSPARENCIES

WHAT IS CONFLICT?

Individuals or groups are in conflict when one or both parties are not <u>now</u> getting what they need or want and are <u>actively</u> pursuing their own goals.

CO 1

CAUSES OF CONFLICT

- Value Differences
- Role Pressures
- Differences in Perception
- Different Goals
- Differences in Position

CO 2

GROUP DYNAMICS IN CONFLICT

- Each party feels its position is "right"
- Entrenchment
- Peer Pressure to conform to group position
- Escalation

CO 3

PART 2: SCORING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Instructions: Working from your answers in the questionnaire, circle the answer (a or b) in the chart below. Add the circled items for each column to get your scores.

Pair No.					
1	a			b	
2			b	a	
3		a		b	
4			a		b
5	a		b		
6				a	b
7		a	b		
8	b	a			
9	a				b
10		b		a	
11		a			b
12		b			a
13	a	b			
14	b		a		
15	b				a
16				b	a
17	b			a	
18			a	b	
19			b		a
20		b	a		
Column Total (a and b)	Forcing	Harmonizing	Negotiating	Integrating	Avoiding

CO 4

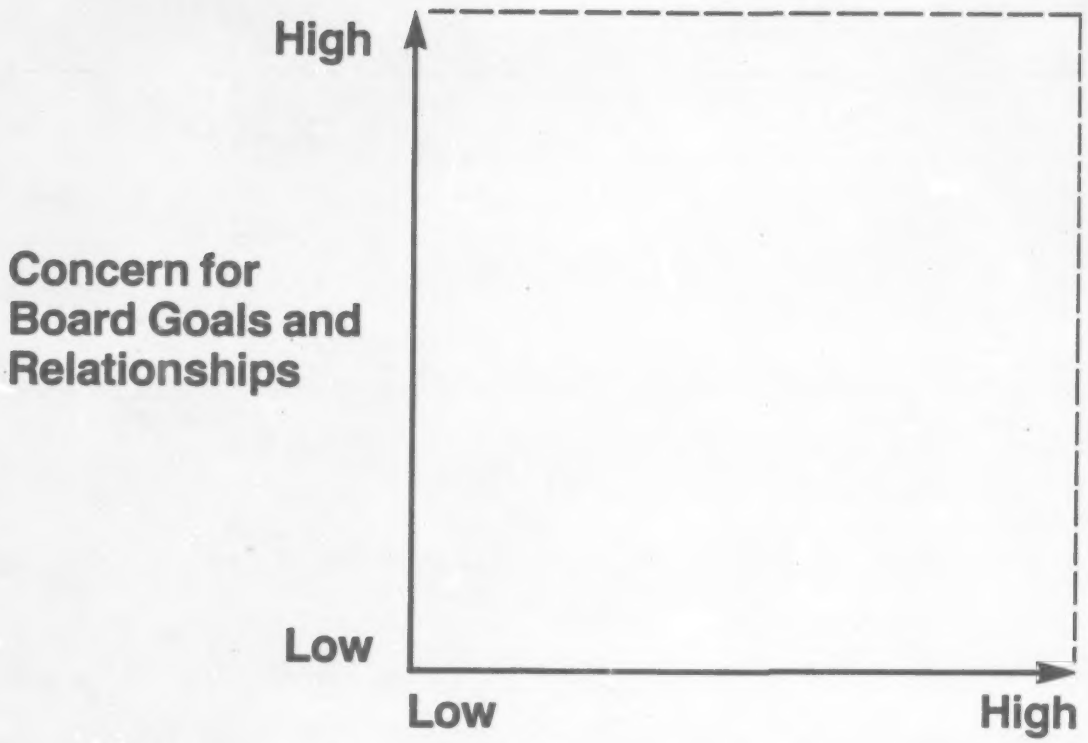
PART 3: GRAPHING YOUR CONFLICT HANDLING STYLES

Instructions: Your scores for the conflict handling styles will probably be mixed. Some will be high and some low. In order to develop a profile of your styles, circle your score for each in the chart below, then draw a line between each circle.

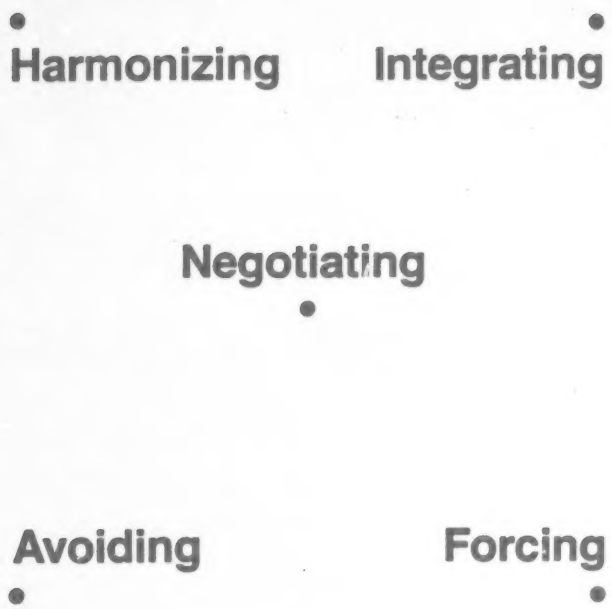
	Forcing	Harmonizing	Negotiating	Integrating	Avoiding
High	8	8	8	8	8
	7	7	7	7	7
	6	6	6	6	6
Mid	5	5	5	5	5
	4	4	4	4	4
	3	3	3	3	3
	2	2	2	2	2
	1	1	1	1	1
Low	0	0	0	0	0

CO 5

PERSONAL STYLES OF HANDLING CONFLICT



CO 6


Harmonizing
Integrating
Negotiating
Avoiding
Forcing

FORCING

Aim: Achieve individual goals, using power, position, persuasion

USEFUL

- quick, decisive action required (crisis)
- unpopular decisions must be made (school closure)
- your position is right (legal)
- you have power (votes)

PROBLEMS

- strains working relations
- can create win/lose outcome
- decision may not have broad base of support
- sabotage or undermining of decision can result

CO 7

HARMONIZING

Aim: Preserve working relations and good feelings at the expense of individual goals

USEFUL

- issue is more important to others
- avoid losing in win/lose situation
- achieve support for future decisions in trade off
- time and place not right for conflict

PROBLEMS

- yours is right position
- you can't support the decision
- you lose face and feel badly
- your support of clear decision is needed

CO 8

AVOIDING

Aim: Stay out of conflict situation by taking no position on goals or working relationships

USEFUL

- **no win situation**
- **other business more important**
- **harm will outweigh benefits**
- **postponement is best**

PROBLEMS

- **decisions lack input**
- **decisions are postponed**
- **indecisive or uncaring image may result**

CO 9

NEGOTIATING

Aim: Achieve part of individual goals and maintain harmony through compromise

USEFUL

- power is equal
- parties pursuing different goals (labor/management)
- a temporary solution is workable
- builds some trust (good faith)

PROBLEMS

- long term solution needed
- losses outweigh gains
- goals only partially achieved
- compromise may be difficult to enforce

CO 10

INTEGRATING

Aim: Find new set of goals that incorporates goals of opposing parties and improves working relations

USEFUL

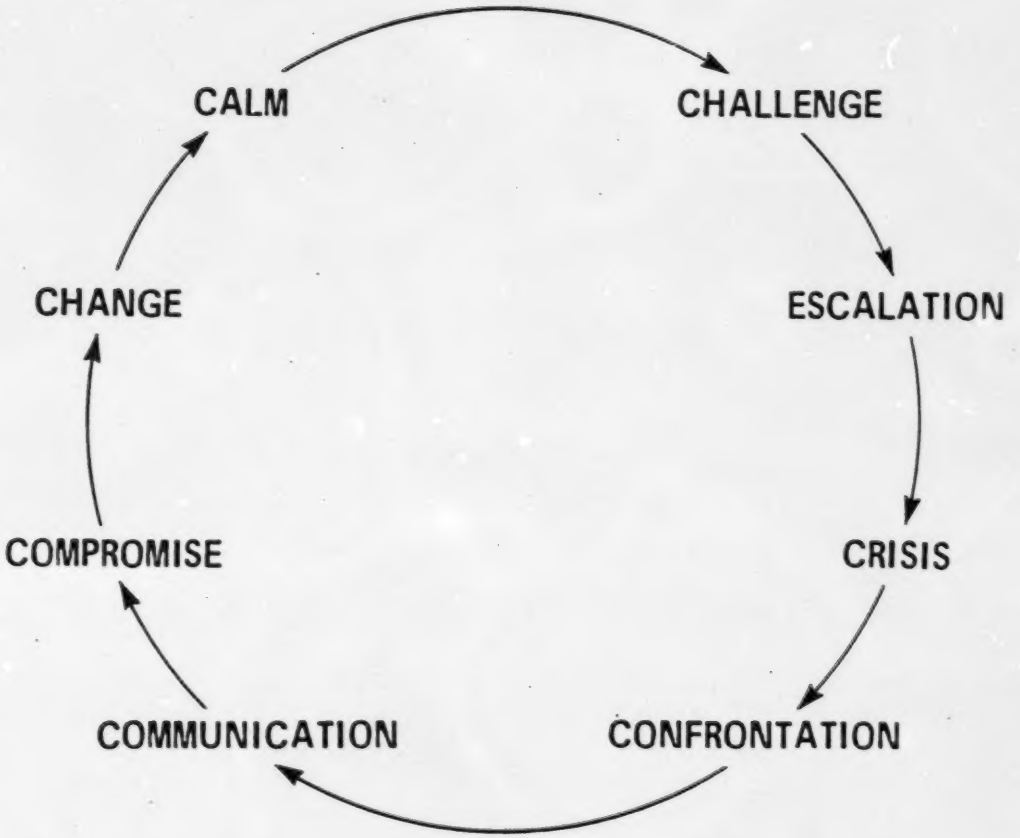
- unified approach needed
- long term solution required
- growth and change are desired by parties

PROBLEMS

- time consuming (in-depth effort)
- risks involved (openness)
- lack of trust and communication

CO 11

CONFLICT CYCLE



STRATEGIES OF MANAGING CONFLICT

- Win/Lose
- Bargaining/Negotiation
- Problem Solving

CONFLICT IS DESTRUCTIVE WHEN IT

- Takes attention away from other important activities
- Undermines morale or self-concept
- Polarizes people and groups, reducing cooperation
- Increases or sharpens differences
- Leads to irresponsible and harmful behavior, such as fighting, name-calling

CONFLICT IS CONSTRUCTIVE WHEN IT

- Results in clarification of important problems and issues
- Results in solutions to problems
- Involves people in resolving issues important to them
- Causes authentic communication
- Helps release emotion, anxiety, and stress
- Builds cooperation among people through learning more about each other; joining in resolving the conflict
- Helps individuals develop understanding and skills